

Saint John's Lutheran Church

Stuttgart, Arkansas



REFORMATION
2017 It's Still All About
Jesus

THE
LUTHERAN CHURCH
MISSOURI SYNOD

November, 2017



For you have been born again, not of perishable seed, but of imperishable, through the living and enduring

word of God. For, "All men are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall, but the word of the Lord stands forever." And this is the word that was preached to you. 1 Peter 1:23-25

It's important for us to remember that the Reformation was not a single day in the history of the world but an on-going event in the life of a believer. We see this understanding in the first of Luther's 95 Theses: *When our Lord and Master Jesus Christ said, "Repent", He willed the entire life of believers to be one of repentance.* The entire life...a daily occurrence lived and celebrated in and for our Lord!

That said, life was not easy for any of the Reformers, as the Empire was always looking to restore what it believed to be good order. And in order to see this done, the Empire most certainly was not above using military force.

Enter the Smalcaldic League. This was a defensive alliance formed by "Protestant" territories of the Holy Roman Empire to defend themselves collectively against any attempt to enforce a return to Catholicism following the Diet of Augsburg in 1530. At that gathering, the

Protestant territories were given a deadline by which they were to return to Catholicism. Not desiring to give up their newly discovered spiritual freedom, the League was established in February 1531 at Schmalkalden, Germany. It was formed with the idea that it would last for six years; but due to the ongoing threat of military action, it continued on for years longer... more on that in the next paragraph.

On the other side of the coin, Emperor Charles V feared that the league would ally itself with his enemy, Francis I of France. He, therefore, did not provoke the league with any show of force until the year 1544, when he made peace with Francis. He then began military operations against the league in 1546, beginning the War of Schmalkald. He defeated the league in 1547.

Now to my reason for sharing all that history: the symbol **VDMA**. **VDMA**, as it states around the initials above, stands for the Latin motto **Verbum Domini Manet in Aeternum—The Word of the Lord Endures Forever**. This was the motto of the Lutheran Reformation, a confident expression of the enduring power and authority of God's Word. The motto is based on Isaiah 40:6-8 quoted by 1 Peter 1:24-25.

This motto first appeared in the court of Frederick the Wise in 1522. He had it sewn onto the right sleeve of the court's official clothing, which was worn by prince and servant alike. It was used by Fred-

erick's successors, his brother John the Steadfast, and his nephew John Frederick the Magnanimous. **It became the official motto of the League and was used on flags, banners, swords, cannons and uniforms as a symbol of the unity of the Lutheran laity who struggled to defend their beliefs, communities, families and lives against those who were intent on destroying them.**

While we might not have hostile forces gathered at our borders, threatening hearth and home; Saint Paul reminds us (Ephesians 6) that we are involved in a war in which we cannot stand on our own. A war that isn't against opponents of flesh and blood. It is, however, a war in which the outcome has already been decided...and you know the outcome: death has been defeated by Jesus and His victory over death has been freely given to us!

This is the same, joyous message our Smalcaldic ancestors fought to know: that we are redeemed by God's grace alone, and not by works or indulgences! We have been redeemed by the Word of the Lord! The Word made flesh! The Word whose promise is delivered to us in the pages of Holy Scripture! So let us wear these words as boldly as did they: **Verbum Domini Manet in Aeternum—the Word of the Lord Endures Forever!**

Blessings on your November!

Pastor White

Our Mission:

To Proclaim the Gospel of Redemption through Jesus Christ; & Demonstrate God's Love to One Another, the Community & the World.